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ABSTRACT

A study investigated low-income children's book reading experiences with their mothers and in group reading in preschool when the children were 3 and 4 years old. At the age of 3 years, the primary focus of book readings in both settings was immediate information. Mothers were significantly more likely than teachers to use extending comments, and were less likely to use organizational comments. When children were 4 years old, talk in the home was dominated by immediate talk. There was less extending talk, less total talk by mothers, and more extending comments by children than at age 3. Talk in school included more extending and total talk by teachers and more non-immediate utterances by children. Home-school comparison found school book readings contained more non-immediate talk by teachers and children and more extending, organizational, and total talk by teachers. The great variability of patterns in both settings indicates the presence of multiple patterns of home-school linkage between classrooms and among families in a single classroom. (Author/BB)

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Book Reading with Preschoolers:
Co-Construction of Text at Home and at School

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RUNNING HEAD: Book Reading with Preschoolers

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Abstract

This paper presents results of a study of low-income children's book reading experiences with their mothers and during group reading times in preschool when they were 3- and 4-years-old. Book reading experiences were examined to determine the quantity and nature of talk about books using a system that coded the content of utterances as Immediate (e.g., labeling pictures), Non-Immediate (e.g., recall, analysis), Organizational, or Extending (e.g., requesting clarification). The types of books read also were considered. When they were 3 years old the primary focus of book readings in both settings was on Immediate information. Compared with teachers, mothers were significantly more likely to use Extending comments and fewer Organizational comments. When children were 4 years old talk in the home was again dominated by Immediate talk; compared with the previous year there was less Extending talk and less total talk by mothers, and more Extending comments by children. Compared with the previous year, talk in school included more Extending and total talk by teachers and more Non-Immediate utterances by children. Home-school comparisons found school book readings contained more Non-Immediate talk by teachers and children and more Extending, Organizational and total talk by teachers. The nature of the interactions in the homes and preschools and the changes from year-to-year support a Partnerships model of home-school relationship. However, the great variability in patterns of reading in both settings indicates the presence of multiple

- patterns of home-school linkage across classrooms and among families in a single classroom.

Experiences during the preschool years play a pivotal role in providing children knowledge and skills that enable them to benefit from formal reading instruction in school. Correlational and longitudinal studies done in the home have demonstrated that opportunities to read and discuss books in the home during the preschool years are especially potent supports for later literacy functioning (Chomsky, 1970; Clark, 1975; Goldfield & Snow, 1984; Wells, 1985). Research on the effects of book reading in preschool settings is less plentiful, but some work also points to the importance of these experiences for literacy development (Dickinson, 1989; Karweit, 1989; Mason, in press; Mason & Allen, 1986).

There are many possible reasons why book reading experience during the preschool years supports later literacy: a) it can help children begin to reflect on units of language such as words, syllables, and phonemes (for a review see Adams, 1990; Watson, 1989); b) it familiarizes children with the language found in books (Purcell-Gates, 1988; Pappas & Brown, 1987a, 1987b); c) it provides children opportunities to learn how books convey meaning (Harste, Woodward & Burke, 1984; Sulzby, 1985); d) it encourages the development of vocabulary (Ninio 1983; Whitehurst et. al., 1988); e) it models the construction of elaborated informational structures about texts (Snow & Goldfield, 1982); f) it introduces children to ways of talking about books that they later will encounter when they enter elementary school (Heath, 1982, 1983; Dickinson & Smith, 1990;

Lomax & McGee, 1987); g) and it familiarizes children with print and print conventions (Lartz & Mason, 1988; Mason, in press).

Children's readiness to benefit from formal literacy instruction in elementary school is at least partly determined by the frequency of book reading experiences during the preschool years, the nature of the interaction occuring as books were read, and the type of books read. We assume that more reading is better and that talk that poses cognitive challenges is desirable (e.g, talk about vocabulary, analysis of character motivations, predictions about outcomes). The nature of books read also may be important because high quality books are more likely to expose children to richer language and to engage children's imaginations (Huck, Helpler & Hickman 1987). Additionally, a mix of narrative and non-narrative books might be important to ensure exposure to varied vocabulary and diverse ways of taking meaning from text.

Book Reading Practices in Homes and Preschools

Studying book reading in the home. Many of the benefits of book experiences are likely result from the interaction between adult and child as they talk about the text (e.g., increased language awareness, ways of making sense of books). Therefore, to understand the impact of home experiences on children's literacy development it is important to describe both frequency of book reading and the nature of these events. Such information is critical for low socio-economic status (LSES) and minority children because children from these families are known to be at risk of educational failure (e.g., NAEP, 1986). Cross-sectional

data from Israel indicate that, compared with HSES mother, LSES mothers of children aged 17 - 22 months are less likely to request children to produce labels for items and are less likely to increase their demands for active participatation as the children's linguistic capacities improve (Ninio, 1980). In contrast, a study of low-income mothers reading with four-year-olds revealed some cognitively challenging talk and efforts by mothers to tailor the cognitive level of their questions to children's response capabilities (Pellegrini, Perlmuter, Galda & Brody, 1990).

Naturalistic study of book reading in homes of low income families suggests that it is not typically an integral activity in these homes. Two studies found that mothers may not routinely read to children, and when they do they may restrict themselves to questions requesting highly circumscribed responses such as labels and recall of literal details (Anderson, Teale & Estrada, 1980; Heath, 1982; Heath & Branscombe, 1986). On the other hand, Taylor and Dorsey-Gaines' (1989) study of families facing extreme poverty with children who were doing well in the early grades found mothers engaging in a multitude of literacy-related activities that included some reading of books. Additionally, Teale and Sulzby's (1986) study of low-income families that read regularly clearly demonstrates the existence of such families and reveals that they discuss books as they read them.

Current data on home book reading practices between LSES mothers and their children have limitations. The only studies

with samples large enough to permit statistical analyses that examined interactional processes (Ninio, 1980; Pellegrini et. al., 1990) present cross-sectional results from two different countries (Israel, United States), include children of different ages, and use different kinds of reading materials (Pellegrini used expository and narrative books). Perhaps it is not surprising that they yielded different results. Teale's cross-sectional observational study (1986) did not provide information about details of interaction surrounding the use of books and the ethnographic studies that do examine interaction (Anderson, Teale & Estrada, 1980; Heath, 1983; Heath & Branscombe, 1986; Sulzby & Teale, 1987) necessarily involve small samples. To understand better patterns of book reading in low-income families in the United States we need data on a reasonably large group of children over time that includes descriptions of the details of the interactions that occur as books are read.

Studying book reading in preschools. One way our society attempts to support development of children from LSES homes is to provide some of them opportunities to attend preschool. Given the evidence indicating the impact of book reading during the preschool years on later literacy, one would anticipate that book reading would be an important staple in preschool programs. Unfortunately, we know even less about patterns of book use in preschools than about their use in the home. Some exceptional preschools do provide children rich literacy experiences (Martinez, Cheyney, McBroom Hemmeter & Teale, 1989). Some

information about typical book reading practices in preschool settings serving low-income children comes from observations made as part of the current study when the children were three (Dickinson, 1990). These data reveal great variability in the frequency of book readings, with some classrooms reading books in groups two to three times per week while others read books seven or more times per week. There also are differences in how books are read to groups of children. Sometimes children are engaged in highly interactive discussions that include considerable high level talk about books whereas in other cases the amount of participation by children is rather limited (Dickinson, 1989; Dickinson & Keebler, 1989; Dickinson & Smith, 1990). Although this work has given us some understanding of how books are read to different groups of children, we still lack descriptions of how talk about books changes as children grow older. Therefore, we lack information regarding developmentally related changes in how teachers read to young children.

Preschool Book Reading Practices as Preparation for School

Implicit in discussions of book reading practices are assumptions regarding the significance of book reading for later literacy. Furthermore, for children who spend time in group care settings, full understanding of the impact of early experiences on later literacy requires consideration of patterns of exposure in both home and school settings. Previously book reading has been studied either in homes or in preschools (with the possible exception of Heath, 1983, who examined book reading practices in

the home and later adjustment to school literacy practices). This restrictive focus means that we have a limited view of the factors that contribute to later schooling success. Studying book reading practices in both settings greatly increases our ability to understand early literacy development. Additionally, by obtaining information about home and school experiences we can identify those children who have limited book reading experience in the home. Studying the effects of school book reading on these children's literacy development provides an opportunity to disentangle partially the effects of book reading practices from the effects of other home factors.

The current study includes observations in the home and preschool; hence we are able to examine patterns of relationship between home and school book reading during the preschool years and children's experiences in elementary school. In order to consider this issue we will examine three models of the role of preschools in preparing children for later schooling and literacy tasks. We focus on the role of preschools for expository purposes, but each model includes consideration of all three elements: the home, the preschool and the desired outcome.

Before examining possible relationships between home and preschool we need to specify what we take to be the likely school environment that preschools are preparing children to enter. Two important features of adult-child relationships that numerous studies have found are characteristic in schools (Cazden, 1988; Dunkin & Biddle, 1974; Edwards & Furlong, 1979; Mehan, 1979)

which will be significant for the current research are: a) adults tend to control the topics of conversation, and b) adults talk much more than children (Cazden, 1988). Both of these features of talk are linked to a unifying underlying source: when engaged in conversations with children, teachers tend to have a more powerful, dominant role than do parents. Evidence of this power differential might also come from other indices such as the nature and number of directives during an activity found in both settings (e.g., during book reading). An additional feature of talk in school that may create adjustment problems for some children is that often it includes many questions that test children's grasp of factual details of texts (Allington, 1983; Cazden, 1988; Wixson, 1983).

One potential function of preschool book reading is to help children learn to respond appropriately to the kinds of group interactional demands likely to be encountered in reading groups in first grade. A pattern of results indicating such a home-school relationship would be home book reading practices that are structured by rules different from those found in preschool and similarity between preschool and elementary school discourse patterns. All three models of home-school relationship to be described assume that one role of preschool book reading is to provide socialization to these interactional expectations common in the primary grades.

As we articulate these models two important points should be kept in mind. First, these are descriptions of possible kinds of

relationships between home and school book reading practices; they are not intentionally developed models of what these relationships should be. Second, in a given classroom there will be variability in home book reading practices; therefore several different models of home and school book reading practices may well be present.

Continuation model. In addition to teaching children how to participate in groups, preschools also might introduce children to different kinds of questions about books. In the "Continuation Model" of home-school relations, the home and school both emphasize the ability to provide highly predictable responses (e.g., names for objects, colors, familiar refrains). In this model the preschool helps children learn to participate in new interactional structures, solidifies children's abilities to provide predictable responses to questions, but does little to stretch them toward use of cognitive and linguistic strategies that will be required for later literacy tasks.

Partnership model. In a second approach to reading books, homes provide experiences that tend to emphasize low-level response strategies, while preschools strive to broaden children's approaches to thinking about texts by asking more analytic questions. We will refer to this model as the "Partnership Model": parents get children engaged in book reading and provide a foundation that preschools build upon and expand. This model assumes that preschools provide experiences that are important for later literacy growth which are not provided with

much frequency during book reading events in the home. It does not assume that children or their parents have generalized linguistic, cognitive or literacy-related deficits; rather, that these abilities often are not displayed through explicit verbal interchanges as books are read.

Parallel Growth model. A third possible relationship between home and preschool will be referred to as the "Parallel Growth Model." The pattern of reading associated with this model would include age-related changes in both home and school book reading practices. A shift would be seen in both settings from early emphasis on labeling to later efforts to push children to think more analytically about texts and to expand children's vocabularies.

The Current Study

The data to be reported provide information about home and preschool book reading experiences of three- and four-year-old children. Both the longitudinal and the multiple-setting features of our design are necessary to address the question of how book reading experiences during the preschool years influence later literacy development. The longitudinal nature of our data allows us to see how demands change or fail to change as children mature and the combination of home and school data allows us to examine relationships between the two settings.

In summary, in order to describe the nature of the home-school relationship with regard to book reading when children are three and four years old we addressed the following questions: a)

Does the amount and the content of talk by children and adults change as children get older? b) Are there differences between home and school in the amount and type of talk during book reading?

Research Methods

Procedure

The data were collected as part of the Home-School Study of Language and Literacy Development. This study is following the language development of children from low-income families. This analysis examines book reading interactions at home of 25 mother/child dyads participating in the study, and those of teachers and children in 25 classrooms serving children in our sample.

Home. The 25 mothers and children in this sample are all native English speakers, 13 of the children are boys and 12 are girls, 7 are black and 18 are white. The children were visited at home when the children were three years old (mean age = 3;9, range = 3;6 - 4;4) and again when they were four (mean age = 4;8, range = 4;4 - 5;1). During the home visit the mother was asked to look at a familiar, favorite book with her child. A book was provided by the experimenter if the mother could not produce a book. The readings were audiotaped and context notes were taken. The tapes were later transcribed and coded as described below.

School. Classroom data were collected during visits made to preschools during the mid-winter months when the children in the study were approximately three years old, and again a year later.

For both years, each classroom that we visited included at least one child participating in the larger study. The first and second year visits were not made to the same classrooms because our target children changed rooms. During the first year, 17 classrooms were visited, of which five were Head Start programs. For these classrooms, the mean age of the youngest children was 3;2 months and the mean age for the oldest children was 4;7 months and the mean age range was 17 months. During the second year 12 of the 25 programs visited were Head Start. The mean age of the youngest children in these classrooms was 3;8 and the mean age of the oldest children was 5;0 months.

Classrooms were visited for an entire morning. Teachers were asked to conduct their mornings as usual, except for a request to read a book to a group of children. In most cases this request required little if any change in classroom routines. The group time that included the book reading was videotaped from a location that afforded a view of the teacher and as many children as possible. The books read were selected by the teacher in order to gain information about the types of books teachers chose to read.

Coding

The book reading sessions were examined to determine the quantity and type of contributions made by the adults and children. Every utterance that was not a direct reading of the text was coded using a system that included four categories. First, Immediate utterances are requests for labels, skill

routines such as counting or naming colors, and spontaneous comments about information immediately available on the page, or a rephrasing of the text that has just been read. This category includes many "what" and "where" questions. Second, Non-Immediate utterances move away from what can be seen on the page and include requests for thoughts on and analyses of the characters' behavior or motivation, discussion of vocabulary, or connections between the story and the child's own world. This category includes "why" questions and predictions. Third, Organizational talk is devoted to keeping children's attention and maintaining order. Four, Extending talk is designed to extend a topic and includes feedback and requests for clarification. Talk about books dominated by Immediate utterances has more of the characteristics of conversation (interactive, quick topic change) whereas Non-Immediate talk is less reliant on shared physical context and typically includes more explicit cognitive challenges.

Types of Books Read

The titles of mothers' and teachers' book selections were coded according to category. Six categories were defined: 1) fairy/folktales - a traditional account sometimes including an element of fantasy such as Hansel and Gretel or Anansi the Spider; 2) nursery rhymes - a short metric poem often learned by young children (e.g. Hey Diddle Diddle or Hickory, Dickory, Dock); 3) rhyming/predictable narrative - a fictional or non-fictional story told in rhyme (e.g. Green Eggs and Ham) or a text

memorized so that the text has become predictable; 4) didactic non-narrative - a text designed to instruct readers on a topic or topics or for use as an educational textbook. Basal readers are included in this category as are books such as Why is the Grass Green?; 5) didactic narrative - a story written to entertain as well as to instruct the reader such as Just a Mess or Big Bird's Four Seasons; 6) children's narrative - a fictional story for children (e.g. Good Night Moon, Caps for Sale, or Where the Wild Things Are).

Results

First we report measures of the amount and content of child and adult talk for each age followed by comparisons of the two years. We then discuss the nature of the books read in the two settings each year.

The Three-year-old's Experience

Home. As depicted in Figure 1, about half of the talk by children and adults about books in the home deals with Immediate information (see Table 1a for mean amount of talk). Extending talk is the next most common category, with Non-Immediate and Organizational talk being the least common types. Children and mothers contribute comparable amounts of comments, with these comments being balanced across all types of talk except for extending comments, which are produced almost three times as often by adults as by children (11 utterances vs. 4.32, $t(35) = 3.15$, $p = .003$).

INSERT FIGURE 1 & TABLES 1a, 1b & 1c ABOUT HERE

School. As shown in Figure 1, Immediate comments and Organizational talk were both common, with Extending and Non-Immediate talk being less common. Compared with the home, in school there were more asymmetries between the contributions made by adults and children, with adults contributing significantly more Organizational $t(22) = 2.45$, $p = .02$, and Extending comments $t(20) = 2.63$, $p = .016$ than children.

School and home. Comparing our three year olds' book reading experiences in the home and school (see Table 1c), we find children doing more Extending of topics in the home $t(38) = 2.28$, $p = .028$ and less Organizational talk $t(21) = -2.64$, $p = .015$. Adult talk included more Organizational talk in the school $t(20)$ $p = .007$.

The Four-year-old's Experience

Home. When children were four about 40 percent of children's and adult's talk in the home was Immediate talk (Figure 2). Non-Immediate and Extending talk each accounted for about a quarter of the talk (see Table 1b for means) and Organizational talk again was rare. Comparison of adult's and children's talk showed similar patterns of distribution with two exceptions (table 1c). While overall rates of Organizational talk were very low -- slightly over one adult utterance per book reading -- adults did more such talk than did children $t(24) = -2.30$, $p = .03$. Interestingly, we also found that children did

more Extending than did adults $t(29) = -2.36$, $p = .03$.

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

School. In school teachers' talk was nearly evenly divided among the four categories, with each accounting for about a quarter of the talk they produced (see Figure 2). Non-Immediate and Immediate talk were the two most common types of talk by children, with each accounting for between 35 and 40 percent of children's talk. The remainder of their talk was divided evenly between Organizational and Extending talk. Distinctions between teacher and child roles were marked by the fact that teachers talked more than children $t(38) = 2.96$, $p = .005$ and did far more Organizational $t(31) = 4.56$, $p = .001$ and Extending talk $t(30) = 4.30$, $p = .0002$.

School and home. Comparison of children's contributions to book readings in home and school reveals that in school book readings children contributed more Non-Immediate $t(29) = -3.37$, $p = .002$ and more Organizational comments $t(24) = -4.95$, $p = .0001$. Comparing teachers with mothers, we find that teachers talked more $t(39) = -4.00$, $p = .0003$, used more Non-Immediate utterances $t(31) = -3.12$, $p = .004$, contributed more Organizational comments $t(29) = -5.68$, $p = .0001$, and did more Extending $t(26) = -5.08$, $p = .0001$.

Age-Related Changes in Home and School Book reading

Comparison of children's experiences across the two years

reveals relatively few age-related changes (see Table 2), but those that emerge are interesting. In the home there was an age-related decrease in the amount of Organizational talk by children $t(25) = 2.32$, $p = .03$. Two changes found in mothers' talk were a decrease in the amount of Extending talk $t(26) = 4.48$, $p = .0001$ and in the total amount of talk $t(40) = 2.07$, $p = .04$. In the school there was an age-related increase in the amount of Non-Immediate talk by teachers $t(38) = -2.20$, $p = .03$.

Types of Books Read

The three year old experience. At home, three year olds in our study were read twice as many children's narratives than any other category of book (32%). Next in popularity were fairy/folk tales, didactic narratives, and didactic non-narratives, each of which were read by 16% of the mothers.

At school, children's narratives dominated the three-year book reading experience (58%). Fairy/folk tales and rhyming narratives were both read in 18% of the book readings analyzed. Nursery rhymes and didactic non-narratives were not read to three year olds at school.

The four year old experience. At home about one-third of the books read to four year olds were children's narratives. Twenty-six percent of the books read were didactic non-narratives; didactic narratives were read sixteen percent of the time. Mothers rarely read fairy/folk tales (5%), nursery rhymes (10%), and rhyming/predictable narratives (5%).

At school most teachers read didactic books or predictable

text books that were used for instructional purposes: didactic non-narrative (12%), didactic narrative (12%), and rhyming/predictable narrative (36%). Children's narratives were read to children 24% of the time, fairy and folk tales were read 16% of the time and nursery rhymes not at all in our sample.

School and Home. Mothers read a wider range of types of books to children at home than teachers did at school. Mothers selected books from all of the categories. In school, three year olds were read books from only four of the possible six book categories and the four year olds were read books from five of the six categories. Children's narratives were the most popular choice of book both at home and at school. Perhaps surprisingly, mothers read very few nursery rhymes to their children and teachers did not read them at all. Rhyming narratives were more prevalent in schools while didactic narratives and non-narratives were read more at home.

In comparison with the three year old book reading experience, the four year old experience in school was characterized by less narrative material and more books used explicity for instructional purposes. In the home there was an age-related trend toward use of more didactic books.

Discussion

In this paper we have described the home and preschool book reading experiences of a group of low-income children when they were three and four years old. Given the central importance of book reading experiences to later cognitive functioning, a better

understanding of patterns of book reading will help elucidate the nature of the relationship between children's experiences in low-income homes and in the preschools that serve them.

Developmental Patterns in Homes and Schools

When our children were three years old their book reading experiences in the home were dominated by talk dealing with immediately present information (e.g., picture naming, locations of objects), with efforts to extend and clarify talk also being common. When children were four years old roughly the same amount of Non-Immediate talk was present as when they were three, but there was a large decrease in the amount of Extending talk by adults, a drop in Immediate talk and a decline in the overall amount of talk by adults. This pattern suggests that parents are aware that the type of conversation prevalent when children were three (e.g., labeling and discussing pictures) is no longer appropriate with four-year-olds, but they have no alternative conversational pattern with which to replace it. Thus, while there was no age-related increase in parental efforts to pose explicit intellectual challenges for their children when reading books, there is evidence that the mothers were aware of their children's increasing intellectual and linguistic sophistication. Additionally, it should be noted that the mothers may have been striving to challenge their older children by expecting them to make sense of books on their own. This interpretation is consistent with Heath's (1983) finding that Trackton mothers believe children need to learn to figure out the world on their

own.

Additionally, changes in the types of books being read might result in older children being challenged in new ways. Some support for this proposition is found in the slight increase in the use of didactic nonnarratives (books that can introduce new information and novel vocabulary) with four year olds. Nevertheless, it is clear that the parents were not making explicit efforts to increase the amount of intellectually challenging talk about books as their children got older.

School book experiences when children were three years old were dominated by Immediate and Organizational talk. When children were four years old considerable time was spent talking about Immediate and Non-Immediate topics. For the children's talk these two categories were roughly comparable and accounted for three quarters of their utterances. Given the fact that most children were in mixed-age groups it is interesting that our four-year-olds' groups were significantly more likely to engage in Non-Immediate talk than were our three-year-olds' groups. This trend toward cognitive scaffolding was evident in the choice of books read as well. The increase in the selection of didactic materials, both narrative and non-narrative, and the even greater increase in predictable narratives, which usually are used for instructional purposes, indicate that teachers are more likely to use books to instruct and cognitively challenge older children. Thus, while the home developmental patterns suggest no increase in explicitly posed cognitive challenges from year to year, the

school results suggest the presence of an age-related increase.

Implications for Models of Home-School Relationships

We proposed three models that might describe the relationships between book reading events in homes and preschools. In all three models it was assumed that one function of group book reading events in preschool is that they teach children how to interact as a member of a group when books are being read and discussed. The models differ in their assumptions about the nature of the explicit cognitive demands placed on children. In the Continuation Model, both teachers and parents prepare children for school by teaching them to respond to factual questions. In the Partnership Model parents provide a foundation of appreciation fo books by making reading to children a pleasant familiar activity, and schools build on this foundation by encouraging children to engage in more explicit cognitively challenging talk about books. Finally, the Parallel Growth Model assumes similar developmental trajectories in how parents and teachers encourage children to talk about books.

The order in which these models are described is not arbitrary. We assume that, while the Continuation Model may prepare children for initial literacy instruction, it does not encourage the type of growth needed to cope with more advanced literacy demands. The Partnership and Parallel Growth Models both posit that children are being provided experiences that support these long-term goals. The difference between the two is that, with the Parallel Growth Model, children are receiving much

more such support.

Participant roles. Our data clearly indicate that preschools are different interactional settings from homes. Adults and children assume different roles in these two settings, with the teacher assuming a much more dominant role than does the parent during book reading sessions. The powerful role of the teacher is evidenced by the fact that teachers but not mothers talked significantly more than children and were far more likely to make comments related to maintaining attention and order. Both of these patterns were much more evident among the older children, suggesting greater differentiation of adult and child speaker roles in preschool the closer children get to elementary school. The differences between home and school speaker roles and the age-related increase in role differentiation were especially clearly revealed by the finding that, in the home, four year olds contributed more Extending utterances than parents whereas in preschools adults did much more Extending than the children. This pattern suggests that, in the home, the older children are more likely to control topic selection and the amount of attention paid to a given topic.

The pattern found in preschool teachers' talk -- high levels of Organizational talk, more talk and more control of the topic -- is the pattern commonly found in elementary schools (xxxxxxx). Thus, these results provide support for all three models' assumption that preschools introduce children to interactional roles different from those they experience in the home and akin

to those found in elementary schools.

Explicit cognitive challenge. Our analysis of the content of book reading talk suggests that the Partnership Model best describes the nature of the relationship between the home and the preschool. When children were three years old, explicit cognitive demands were made with the same frequency in both settings, suggesting the parents were providing experiences with books roughly similar to those being provided at school in this respect. The dominant topic of conversation in both settings -- labeling objects, events, and colors in pictures -- is appropriate for three year olds. Other factors point to the beneficial nature of home book experiences. Most importantly, children were enjoying books with their mothers, thereby simultaneously deepening their relationships with books and their mothers. Also, perhaps because of the intimate nature of the event, the children were almost certain to be attending, as indicated by the low rate of Organizational talk in the home. Thus, our evidence suggests that mothers are providing children a solid base of experiences with books.

When children were four years old there is evidence of a shift in the nature of the relationship between home and school book readings. Preschools provided these older children far more exposure to explicit talk about books, especially talk of a Non-Immediate nature. We assume that, in order to become highly literate, children ultimately will need to acquire the kind of decontextualized language skills that are fostered through such

explicit talk about Non-Immediate information. Therefore this type of interaction can be seen as supporting children's acquisition of literacy-related strategies that mothers appear not to be dealing with as directly as do teachers. This pattern of results is consistent with the Partnership Model's assumption that teachers extend home experiences by helping children acquire literacy-related skills that are not being optimally supported in the home.

We therefore, conclude that, for the "average" LSES child and the "average" preschool in New England urban areas serving LSES children, the relationship between homes and preschools can be described as being a Partnership in which parents provide good initial experiences with books. As children mature and are ready to cope with more cognitively demanding talk about books (e.g., analysis of motives, talk about language), preschool teachers are more likely to provide this type of experience. In addition, preschools introduce children to the interactional role of "respondent-in-a-group" that will be the norm when they enter elementary school.

It should be emphasized that, although we find evidence of a typical model of home-school relationship, there is great variability in the patterns of book reading both in homes and in preschools. Some mothers and teachers engage in minimal talk about books while others encourage extensive conversations about books. We have characterized home and school relationships using idealized patterns, but it is important to note that, because of

the great variability in teachers' reading styles, there are many differences among preschools. Furthermore, because of the variation in how parents read, different patterns of home-school relationship exist within each classroom.

Implications

Our results have important implications both for how preschool teachers work with children in their classrooms and for their work with parents. The relatively high proportions of talk dealing with organizational matters in school suggest that teachers might do well to consider trying to read to smaller groups of children. An added benefit of this change could be an increase in the amount and quality of talk about books, because small groups have been found to be highly effective settings for encouraging talk about books (Yoder & Kaiser, 1989).

A second change that preschool teachers might consider is to follow the lead of the parents of the four year olds and introduce more informational books. Such books might appeal to children who are not as easily interested in fiction, they provide opportunities for new vocabulary and information not necessarily enountered in fiction, and they tend to stimulate conversation about books (Pellegrini, Perlmutter, Galda & Brody, 1989).

Our results also have implications for parents. Our data suggests that some low-income parents are comfortable talking about immediate aspects of texts (e.g., labeling pictures), but tend not to engage children in discussions that expand the story

or introduce new information and vocabulary. There are many possible reasons why they do not explore these aspects of stories: they may have encountered such discussions rarely when in school, they may feel they are situationally or culturally inappropriate, or they may not realize their potential value. If a preschool teacher is to shift the home-school relationship model from that of Partnership to the Parallel Growth Model, she needs to find ways to help parents become aware of their book reading patterns, understand their implicit beliefs, and consider whether they are comfortable engaging their children in more explicit cognitively challenging talk about books. If parents are open to such a shift in how they approach book reading, teachers can work to help parents develop new patterns for engaging their children in talk about books.

We believe that our data have described important features of one setting in which low-income preschool children are being helped to acquire literacy-related skills. However, we acknowledge that actual links between the language experiences we have described and literacy outcomes are speculative. Additionally, we have examined only a small slice of life in the home and school. Although considerable evidence indicates that book reading is of critical importance to literacy development, other home and school experiences also may play critical roles in determining children's later literacy functioning. Heath's (1983) work demonstrates that patterns of book reading are merely one portion of the fabric of language interaction found in the

home. Furthermore, analysis of informal conversations during dinner time from the same study has revealed a highly significant relationship between the amount of Non-Immediate talk during book readings and the amount of narrative talk during mealtimes. Thus, our descriptions of book reading may give insight into how parents and children use language across a range of settings.

The on-going research program from which this study is drawn eventually will enable us to develop much fuller descriptions of the nature of the relationships between homes and schools and to test our assumptions regarding the the impact of early book reading on later literacy. To augment the type of large-scale predictive study we are doing, there is need for in-depth longitudinal research to determine whether the patterns we have found during our ventures into homes and preschools are consistent with what one would see in multiple visits to the same sites. Finally, much research is needed to help us characterize the nature of the relationship between homes and preschools and to understand how this link can used to help parents relate to their children in culturally appropriate ways that give children the best opportunity possible to become literate.

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Table 1a

Amount and Type of Child and Adult Talk During Book Reading at Home and at School When Children Were Three Years Old.

	Home (n = 25)		School (n = 19)		Home vs. School	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	T	p
Child Talk						
Imm.	13.76	19.94	8.21	10.62	1.19	n.s.
Nimm.	3.20	5.60	3.58	4.25	-.25	n.s.
Extend	4.32	4.61	1.84	2.50	2.28	.028
Org.	.76	1.54	3.58	4.46	-2.64	.015
Am't Talk	22.04	28.46	17.47	16.50	.67	n.s.
Adult Talk						
Imm.	12.32	15.59	7.37	7.76	1.38	n.s.
Nimm.	3.84	4.50	5.53	8.87	-.76	n.s.
Extend	11.00	9.55	8.37	10.52	.86	n.s.
Org.	2.12	3.17	11.63	13.38	-3.04	.007
Am't Talk	29.28	26.41	32.79	32.44	-.40	n.s.

Table 1b

Amount and Type of Child and Adult Talk During Book Reading at Home and at School When Children Were Four Years Old.

	Home (n = 25)		School (n = 25)		Home vs. School	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	T	p
Child Talk						
Imm.	9.12	10.08	9.68	8.36	-.21	n.s.
Nimm.	2.04	2.67	7.68	7.94	-3.37	.002
Extend	4.96	6.97	2.92	3.86	1.28	n.s.
Org.	.04	.20	2.88	2.86	-4.95	.0001
Am't Talk	16.16	16.48	23.16	16.04	-1.52	n.s.
Adult Talk						
Imm.	10.68	10.38	9.60	8.20	.41	n.s.
Nimm.	3.04	3.85	9.60	9.79	-3.12	.004
Extend	1.52	2.18	13.16	11.26	-5.08	.0001
Org.	1.20	2.52	10.20	7.51	-5.68	.0001
Am't Talk	16.44	16.22	42.08	27.64	-4.00	.0003

Table 1c

Comparisons of Amount and Type of Adult and Child Talk at Home and at School During Book Reading When Children Were Three- and Four-Years-Old.

	Home Experience Adults vs. Children		School Experience Adults vs. Children	
3-year-old	T	p	T	p
Imm.	-.28	n.s.	-.28	n.s.
Nimm.	.45	n.s.	.86	n.s.
Extend	3.15	.003	2.63	.016
Org.	1.93	.061	2.49	.021
Am't Talk	.93	n.s.	1.83	.078
4-year-old				
Imm.	.54	n.s.	-.03	n.s.
Nimm.	1.07	n.s.	.77	n.s.
Extend	-2.36	.03	4.30	.0002
Org.	2.30	.03	4.56	.0001
Am't Talk	.06	n.s.	2.96	.005

1. See Tables 1a and 1b for means and standard deviations.

Positive T value indicates adults greater than children.

Table 2

Comparisons of Amount and Type of Adult and Child Talk During Book Reading When Children Were Three-Years-Old With When They Were Four-Years-Old at Home and at School.[1]

	Home Experience 3's vs. 4's		School Experience 3's vs. 4's	
Child Talk	T	p	T	p
Imm.	1.04	n.s.	-.51	n.s.
Nimm.	.93	n.s.	-2.20	.034
Extend	-.38	n.s.	-1.06	n.s.
Org.	2.32	.028	.60	n.s.
Am't Talk	.89	n.s.	-1.15	n.s.
Adult Talk				
Imm.	.44	n.s.	-.92	n.s.
Nimm.	.68	n.s.	-1.42	n.s.
Extend	4.84	.0001	-1.44	n.s.
Org.	1.14	n.s.	.42	n.s.
Am't Talk	2.07	.045	-1.02	n.s.

1. See Tables 1a and 1b for means and standard deviations. Positive T value indicates 3-year-olds greater than 4-year-olds.

Figure 1. Type and proportion of interactions during school book reading with three-year-olds at home and at school.

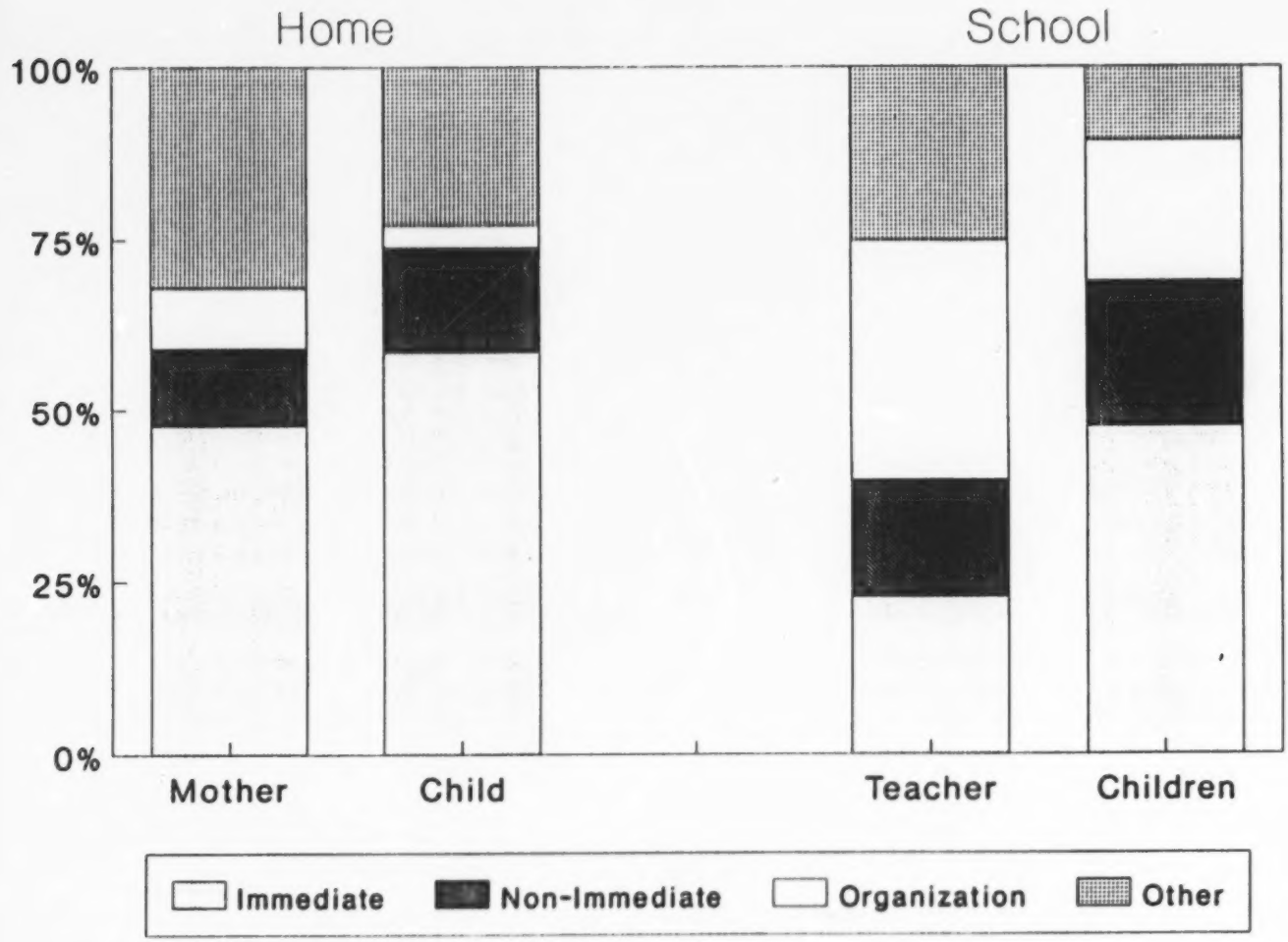

Home
School
100%
75%
50%
25%
0%
Mother
Child
Teacher
Children
Immediate
Non-Immediate
Organization
Other

Figure 2. Type and proportion of interactions during book reading with four-year-olds at home and at school.

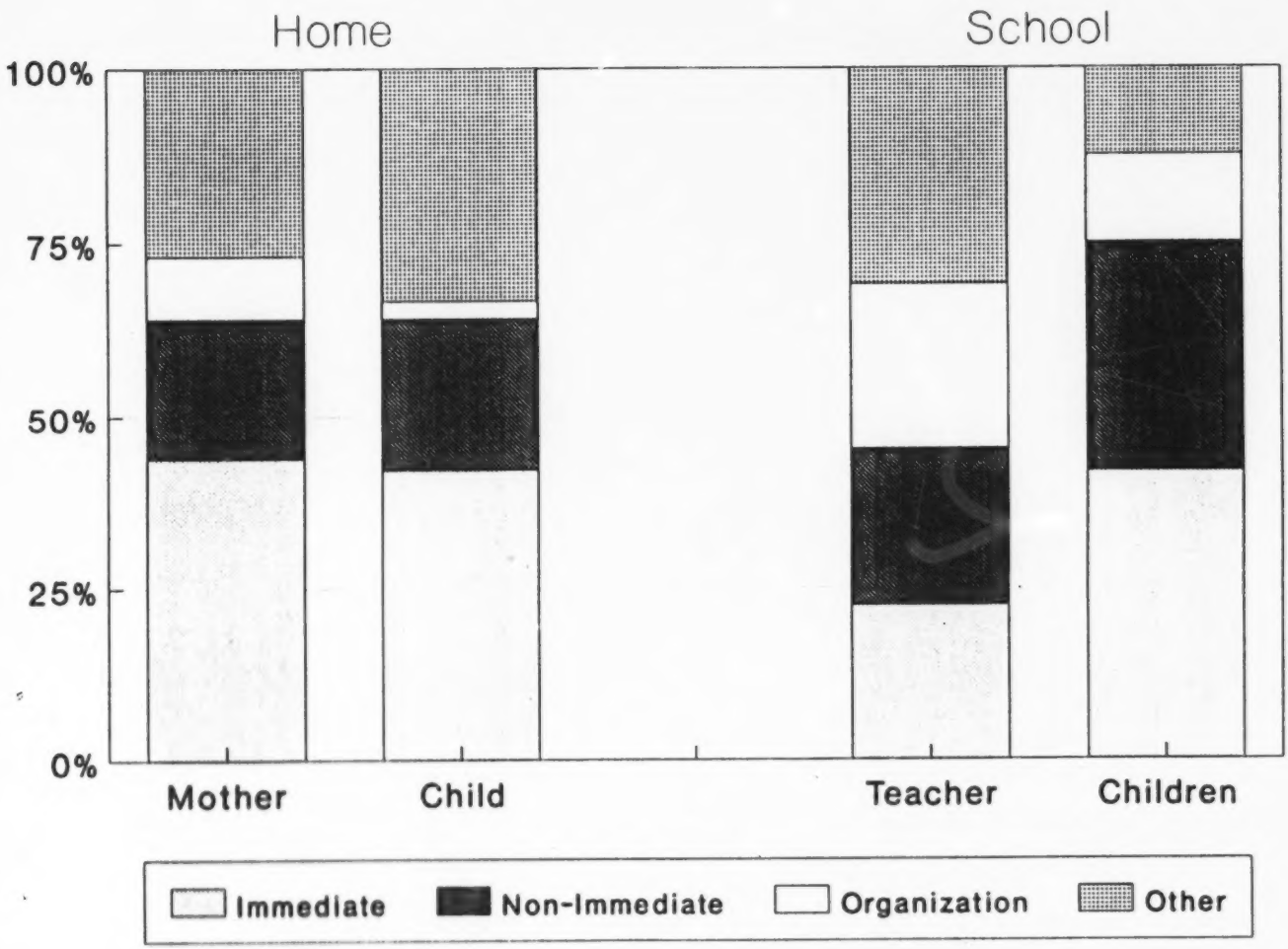
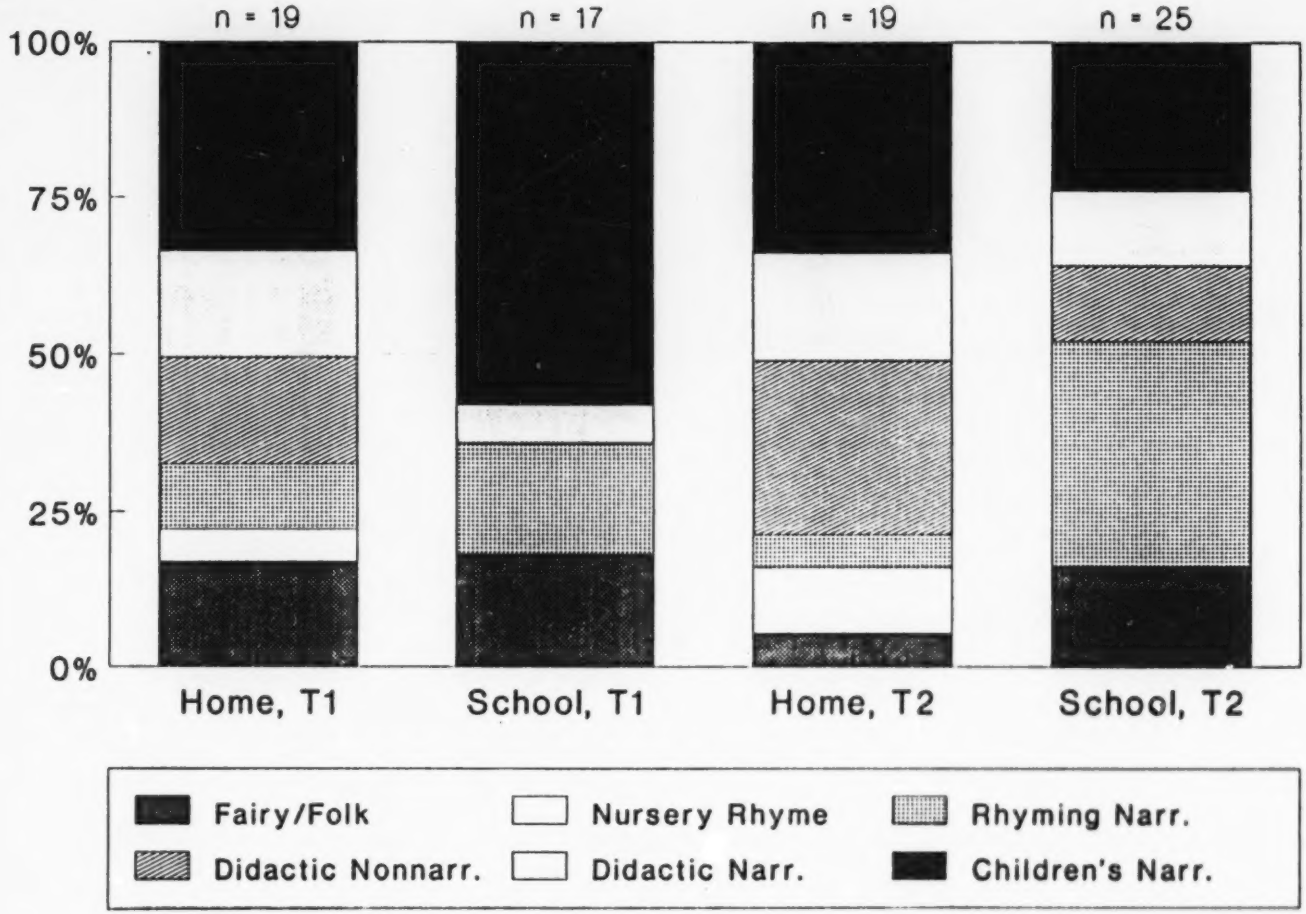

Home
School
100%
75%
50%
25%
0%
Mother
Child
Teacher
Children
Immediate
Non-Immediate
Organization
Other

Figure 3. Types of books read to children at home and at school.


n = 19
n = 17
n = 19
n = 25
100%
75%
50%
25%
0%
Home, T1
School, T1
Home, T2
School, T2
Fairy/Folk
Nursery Rhyme
Rhyming Narr.
Didactic Nonnarr.
Didactic Narr.
Children's Narr.